Reviewer’s report

Title: Mapping the evidence of hepatoprotective properties of Moringa oleifera from sub-Saharan African countries: a systematic review protocol

Version: 0 Date: 28 Apr 2019

Reviewer: Farhad Shokraneh

Reviewer’s report:

This protocol seems to target an interesting research question and there is no systematic review in the topic. I think the findings of this review may help designing the first human trial or avoiding it! So I encourage the authors to improve their protocol based on the following suggestions.

1. GENERAL

1.1. The paper should be edited by a native editor.

1.2. In cover letter, the authors consider Egypt as a Sub-Saharan country. I do not think it is correct.

1.3. I recommend the authors to study and follow the guidelines introduced by CAMARADES (Collaborative Approach to Meta-Analysis and Review of Animal Data from Experimental Studies) http://www.dcn.ed.ac.uk/camarades/ for any systematic review including studies on animals.

2. ABSTRACT

2.1. Methods in abstract copied into the system is incomplete and un-informative. It should at least include some info on databases, eligibility criteria, quality assessment, and final analysis/synthesis.

2.2. Discussion is missing from the abstract copied into the system. Last sentence of the cover letter is suitable to be used is Discussion in abstract.

2.3. Abstract in the system is not matching the abstract in the paper. They should be exactly the same.

3. METHODS
3.1. Exclusion of studies based on language is not acceptable. It is easy to find a volunteer to check the eligibility and/or extract data via posting a task in taskexchange.cochrane.org which is open to all systematic reviewers.

3.2. The authors need to consult a search expert librarian or information specialist in their institute about the choice of databases, how to search them and how to manage the search results. For example I wonder why the authors are not searching any African database or Africa-focused WHO databases as the most relevant resources to the topic.

3.3. The reason for limiting the research to sub-Saharan African countries is not known. I suggest the authors to remove this geographical limitation. There might be valuable studies from the other countries as the plant is available in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. This also may provide insights about the trend of research in other countries and/or differences among species of this plant.

4. REGISTRATION: I see from the PROSPERO that authors are now in screening step. They might need to re-consider parts of the protocol before proceeding. This includes searching African resources.

5. KEYWORDS: Hepatotoxicity, hapatoprotective, liver disease or any other relevant term should be among the keywords.

6. BACKGROUND: While mentioning the clinical properties it is much better if you say in RAT or in ANIMALS or etc. i.e. "activities [in rats/animals] [9]" rather than "activities [9]". Same applies for 'leakages IN RATS [15]'.

7. RESEARCH QUESTIONS: I do not think the question 1 is directly relevant to this review. I understand that the authors are interested in knowing the answer to this question however the answer to this question may require a separate systematic in review in which the authors focus on finding all the studies on substance-induced liver damage not limited to Moringa oleifera. Apparently, substance-induced liver damage can be the subject of many studies not just the ones that intervene with Moringa oleifera.

8. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

8.1. The reason for including rat and mice and excluding human and other animals is not clear. Since the number of comparative studies with two groups is limited enough I suggest the authors now to limit the review to rat and mice unless they provide the rationale.

8.2. There is no rationale in excluding Letters, reviews, and comments as they all can have reports of comparative studies.
8.3. Excluding studies where the full text is not available has no reason. It is usually possible to contact the authors and request a copy of their paper or ask the library to order it.

8.4. Again, the authors should provide the reasons for excluding a studies where 'Moringa oleifera not harvested in sub-Saharan Africa'. Also it should be 'harvested'.

9. SEARCH DATE: Based on Systematic Reviews journal's guideline the search should not be more than 14 month old and at the time that you are receiving this review and making the revisions you should run an update search.

10. COUNTRIES: The authors refer to '54 sub-Saharan African countries'. To the best of my knowledge there are 54 countries in Africa and only 46 of them are Sub-Saharan.

11. DATA ANALYSIS: It is 'Cochran's Q statistic' not 'Cochrane's Q statistic'.

12. RISK OF BIAS: I wonder why the authors mention Cochrane's risk of bias tool instead of SYRCLE's risk of bias tool. This paper lists 30 tools (https://doi.org/10.1289/ehp.1206389) but it is published in 2013. Please check the recommendations by CAMARADES as well. They may have a better tool.


14. DISCUSSION: Using MO in discussions seems unnecessary. Either you should use the full form all over the paper or if you want to abbreviate you should use the full form and abbreviation in Background for the first time and then use MO for the rest of the paper.

I will be glad to see this protocol published in Systematic Reviews but I request the authors to spend some more time on their protocol as it will be cited by the others as an example of a systematic review of animal studies.

Level of interest
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:
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No